

## **CHE-Penn E-Newsletter #6, November, 2005**

### ----- Coordinator's Report -----

I am in the process of setting up an announce-only mailing list on Yahoo called "CHE-Penn partners." You may have already received an invitation to join or a notice that you have been added to the group, or you should hear soon. Please respond to the invitation as soon as you receive it.

#### **Breast Cancer Awareness events**

Breast Cancer Awareness month is October, but a number of events planned by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Pittsburgh Affiliate examining the environmental links to breast cancer will be continuing into November. To produce new materials and schedule speakers for this series, Komen Pittsburgh initiated an alliance with CHE-Penn and the Center for Environmental Oncology at UPCI (CEO). The materials include an up-to-date brochure on the environmental risk factors associated with breast cancer authored by the CEO, along with a Healthy Cooking Guide and a brochure on how to shop for less toxic products. You can download printable versions of these materials at <http://www.che-penn.org/publications>.

All events and updates are listed below, and are also posted to the CHE-Penn website at <http://www.che-penn.org/events.html>. If you have any health/environment related events coming up, please notify me and I will list them on the web page.

#### **Dinner meeting for CHE-Penn partners, Thursday, November 17, 2005, 5-7 PM**

We have received almost 30 RSVPs for the CHE-Penn meeting and dinner on Thursday, November 17, 2005. Let me know if you plan to give a short update on the work of your organization at the dinner. After the dinner, Andrew Wakefield, Ph.D., will present his research on the possible connections between the MMR vaccine and autism.

Space is limited for the dinner; please RSVP no later than November 10, 2005 to [che-penn@comcast.net](mailto:che-penn@comcast.net). Go to: <http://www.che-penn.org/publications/Wakefield-poster.pdf> to download the poster. I look forward to seeing you all there.

#### **Speakers' List and Science Advisory Committee**

A meeting of the CHE-Penn Science Advisory Committee has been scheduled for 9:00 AM, on Friday, December 9, 2005 at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health Faculty Lounge in Parran Hall, Room 110. Contact Conrad "Dan" Volz for more information: [sierrakellydan@msn.com](mailto:sierrakellydan@msn.com) or 724-316-5408.

#### **New Addition to CHE**

**Susan West Marmagas, M.P.H.**, has joined the national staff of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment as Director of Health Programs, Co-Coordinator of CHE's Cancer Working Group and Co-Coordinator of CHE's Discussion Group on Asthma and the Environment. Susan comes to CHE from the Physicians for Social Responsibility and is working from Washington, DC, so we will have more support for our East Coast environmental health endeavors. Welcome, Susan.

Steffi Domike, CHE-Penn Coordinator

----- **CHE-Penn partner PennFuture on House Bills 2140 and 2141.** -----

As you read this, Pennsylvania legislators are working to scuttle efforts to bring lower emission vehicles to Pennsylvania consumers, and to do away with the vehicle emissions testing program we have - both which significantly improve health, air quality, and economic growth in Pennsylvania. Two bills are being considered in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, which together should be dubbed the "Dirty Air and Higher Gas Prices Bills:"

House Bill 2140 would put an end to the state's vehicle emissions testing program. House Bill 2141 would repeal Pennsylvania's Clean Vehicles Program. That program would give Pennsylvanians the option to purchase vehicles that emit low amounts of pollution starting in model year 2008. These same vehicles also get great fuel efficiency, so it's a win-win, helping to reduce our demand for gasoline and helping to keep gas prices from rising, while helping to eliminate a major source of pollution.

Visit PennFuture's Web site (<http://www.pennfuture.org>) for more information and to take action now to let your state elected officials know that clean cars in Pennsylvania are important to you. You will find a link to the Legislative Action Center. There you can edit a sample letter that goes directly to your legislators. You can also find contact information to write a letter to the editor.

For more information, contact Heather Sage, Director of Outreach for PennFuture, at 412-258-6681 or by e-mail at [sage@pennfuture.org](mailto:sage@pennfuture.org).

----- **Feature article: Auto Emissions and Health** -----

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, driving is the single most polluting activity the majority of us do each day.

One of the worst sources of air pollution, cars and trucks emit nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, which form smog, triggering 370,000 asthma attacks in Pennsylvania each year. These aren't the only harmful pollutants found in automobile exhaust. You'll also find carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, fine particulates, benzene, formaldehyde, and polycyclic hydrocarbons.

Emissions from vehicles have been linked to a variety of detrimental health effects including acute respiratory problems, temporary decreases in lung capacity, impairment of the immune system, increased rates of cancer, heart and lung disease and contributing to birth defects and low birth weight. Unfortunately rolling up your window won't help, and in fact exposure to some car pollutants may be much higher inside your car than outside. Commuters driving in rush hour get the highest exposure, often from pollutants emitted by vehicles ahead of them.

Several studies suggest that there is an association between living near heavy traffic and an increased incidence of childhood cancer. A study in Denver found that children with leukemia were eight times more likely to live close to highways with 20,000 or more vehicles per day than children without leukemia. Dutch researchers looked at the effects of long-term exposure to traffic-related air pollutants on 5,000 adults. They found that people who lived near a main road were almost twice as likely to die from heart or lung disease and 1.4 times as likely to die from any cause compared with those who lived in

less-trafficked areas. Researchers in Southern California found that motor vehicles are the most significant source of ultrafine particles, which have been linked to increases in illness and death.

Emissions from passenger vehicles are increasing in the U.S. despite strategies to make engines more fuel efficient and even with the addition of antipollution devices. This is a result of cars getting larger and trucks, sport utility vehicles and vans replacing smaller, lighter passenger cars.

submitted by Rachel Filippini, Group Against Smog and Pollution, [gasp@gasp-pgh.org](mailto:gasp@gasp-pgh.org)

----- **CHE-Penn partner Clean Water Action on the Toxic Release Inventory**-----

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently proposed a sweeping rollback of the Toxic Release Inventory, which requires companies to report every year on their releases of hundreds of millions of pounds of toxic chemicals to the air, land, and water. For 20 years, the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) has given the public the right to know about toxic pollution from industries in their community. TRI has been used by community groups living next to large polluters, public health researchers studying toxic chemical exposures, and local government officials responding to emergencies, such as Hurricane Katrina.

EPA's proposal will reduce our right to know about pollution:

- Companies will only have to report every other year, as opposed to the current required annual reports. This will increase the lag time between emissions and public reporting to **three and a half years**;
- The amount of a chemical that a company can release before they are required to report it will be increased by **10 times**. This means that thousands of companies will now be able to hide their emissions of hundreds of chemicals;
- Reporting requirements are being reduced for the most dangerous toxic chemicals – those that persist in the environment, and accumulate in our bodies. Companies will be better able to hide their use of known dangers such as lead and mercury.

EPA is accepting comments from the public on this proposal until December 5, 2005. Send a brief e-mail to EPA today, and tell them that the Toxic Release Inventory is an important part of the public's right to know about toxic pollution. EPA should preserve TRI and not reduce required reporting. Make sure you refer to "Docket ID No. TRI-2005-0073" in the subject line.

Office of Environmental Information (OEI) Docket  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Mail Code: 28221T  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20460  
e-mail: [oei.docket@epa.gov](mailto:oei.docket@epa.gov)

submitted by Myron Arnowitt of Clean Water Action, [marnowitt@cleanwater.org](mailto:marnowitt@cleanwater.org)

----- **Pittsburgh Public School Wellness Policy, 2005** -----

A new wellness policy was passed unanimously at the August meeting of the Pittsburgh Public School Board. The policy team included civic leaders, academics, parents and a facilitator. The policy was fashioned after a model developed by the Center for Disease Control.

The goal is to improve wellness across the district. Over three years, the school food offerings will become increasingly healthy. Topics covered by the new policy include staff wellness, nutrition, social work and counseling, school health services, health education, physical education, parent and community involvement, administration and how all these topics relate to academics. You can download a copy of the policy at <http://www.pps.k12.pa.us/stuff/adopted%20wellness%20policy.pdf>

submitted by Robbie Ali, MD, of the Center for Healthy Environments and Communities

---- **EVENT: Saturday, November 5, 2005, "Liberty School Health & Fitness Fair"** ----

The Liberty International Studies Academy School Health Team (Pittsburgh) is holding its first annual School Health & Fitness Fair from 10 AM – 2 PM. Information on healthy living will be available from over 30 organizations. Activities will include: a nutrition lecture, door prizes, health screening, fencing, dancing and cooking demos. Contact Robbie Ali ([robbieali@yahoo.com](mailto:robbieali@yahoo.com)) about starting a school health team at your child's school.

----- **EVENT: Saturday, November 5, 2005, "Air Pollution and Your Health"** -----

Residents for A Clean & Healthy Mon Valley and Clean Water Action/Clean Water Fund are hosting a workshop and health fair from 9 AM – 1 PM at the Jefferson Hills Elementary School, 875 Old Clairton Road in Jefferson Hills.

The speakers include:

- Rachel Blair, MPH, American Lung Association of Pennsylvania;
- Conrad Volz, PhD, University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health;
- James Thompson from the Allegheny County Health Department;
- Mike Wright from the United Steelworkers of America and
- Colleen Willison from the Neville Island Good Neighbor Committee.

Register online at: <http://www.PABucketBrigade.org/registration.html> or call Suzie Brindle at 412-765-3053, ext. 210.

----- **EVENT: Saturday, November 5, 2005, Environmental Health Fair** -----

Paulette Schreiber, CRNP, invites your group to participate in the environmental health fair from 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM on Saturday, November 5, 2005 in St. Mary's in Elk County.

The speakers include:

- Terry Collins, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Green Chemistry Carnegie Mellon University;
- Steffi Domike, M.F.A., Coordinator of CHE-Penn;
- Maryann Donovan, Ph.D., Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute;
- Heather Sage, M.En., Director of Outreach for Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture) and
- Dan Surra, Pennsylvania State Representative.

In the afternoon the organizers plan to have numerous exhibits on health and the environment. Lunch and transportation from Pittsburgh will be provided by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Pittsburgh Affiliate. For more information call 814-788-8174, or email [np\\_pcs@elkregional.com](mailto:np_pcs@elkregional.com).

----- **EVENT: Monday, November 7, 2005, Breast Cancer & the Environment** -----

Tiffany Miles, PhD, Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute joins Steffi Domike, Coordinator of CHE-Penn for a dinner program on environmental health and breast cancer risk at Armstrong County Hospital, West Kittanning on Monday, November 7, 2005 at 6:00 PM. It will be held at the Continuing Education Classroom on the second floor of the hospital. For more information and/or to register, please call Lisa K. Wilkes, Program Director at the Pittsburgh Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, 412-521-2873 x15.

-----**EVENT: Friday, November 11, 2005, Lawn care and chemicals** -----

On Friday, November 11 at 9 a.m. Nancy Gift, PhD, a soil scientist and the new Director of the Rachel Carson Institute at Chatham College, is giving a presentation on lawn care and chemicals to a small group at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute in Conference Room 5 East. Take the elevator to the fifth floor from the Cancer Institute lobby and check with the receptionist for directions from there. If you plan to come, RSVP to Viv Shaffer, [vivshaffer@verizon.net](mailto:vivshaffer@verizon.net).

-----**Thursday, November 17, 2005, CHE-Penn partner dinner and MMR lecture**-----

Put on your calendar the dinner meeting scheduled for Thursday, November 17, 2005, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Mellon Institute at the corner of Bellefield and Fifth Avenues, Pittsburgh. After the dinner Andrew Wakefield, Ph.D., will present his research on the possible connections between the MMR vaccine and autism. After the 7:30-8:30 PM lecture by Dr. Wakefield, there will be a panel discussion with several doctors and researchers. The dinner is free of charge, but space is limited; RSVP by November 10, 2005 to [che-penn@comcast.net](mailto:che-penn@comcast.net).